

ION PILLAT: RETRIEVING TRADITION

Ion Pillat's poetry reveals, in its essence, the image of a chthonic poet that has the nostalgia of water, a poet torn between the sleepiness and fixity of the telluric and the multiform reverie of the aquatic; if one follows the evolutionary thread of this lyrical work, poetic concepts and doctrines of the imaginary, illustrated by the stages of development of pillatian lyricism, are revealed to us. In his study called *Celălalt Pillat*, Al. Cistelean states that "the productive, effective paradox, of pillatian poetry is the use of 'mirific perspective' in a nostalgic solution of vision. An imagining perspective that has the voluptuousness and expansive vocation of the 'discovery' of the world plays with him a regressive project. All lines of this poetry are involved in the pathology of original mirage. It was a matter of course that, sooner or later, this nostalgia will strike form too. All along its itinerary pillatian imaginary tried to exorcise its substantial condition and place its enthusiasm in a formal condition. Formalization was, however, at the limit of *hubris* of the aquatic fantasy. The only thing left to be done was the redemption of this failure by inverse action: the absorption of form by the imaginary. For if there is someone who does not know how to lose, then that's the imaginary." The equation proposed by the critic as a paradigm of antinomies that feed pillatian lyricism is, simply speaking, that of the contrast between form - imaginary, present under many forms in this poetry that always seeks for itself, wanting to adjust the model and the image, the aesthetic canon and the vision. The first volumes of poems of Ion Pillat (*Visări păgâne*, *Eternități de-o clipă*, *Amăgiri* and even *Grădina între ziduri*) put us in front of a hungry spirit marked by a true hunger for space; an uneasy conscience is evident here, a "wanderer's soul" obsessed by the mirage of the distant, marked by a fascination with the Orient. One can speak here about a wandering in both time and space, transcribed in pompous and fantastic colors, of ample decorative-symbolic poignancy. Attracted by the world of the South, of intense solarity, Pillat is no less fascinated by boreal space in a poem such as *Ocean polar*: "Noapte albă. Stalagmite nepătate de ninsoare/ Vin ghețarii cete-cete pribegind din Polul Nord./ Nu-i fior prin valuri clare și în zare nu-i fiord./ Doar pe ape, limpezite cataracte selenare.// Și pe unde, unde stele de argint mărite-apar./ Firmamentul în oglindă își restrânge-n cerc ovalul./ Calea Robilor lactee ninge cu lumină valul./ Legănată de legende, promoroacă de cleștar.// Noapte albă. Gheață naltă iconită ca o friză/ De zăpadă împietrită cu

scipire de oțel/ Își arată amăgirea unor aripi fără țel./ Fulgerare boreală, enigmatica Banchiză”. Obviously, such a propensity towards exotic, distant lands, is part of the symbolist paraphernalia cultivated in our country by authors like Ion Minulescu. The image of the sea, for instance, seen as matrix, archetypal space, is frequented assiduously by the poet, in plastic verse, of an obvious brilliance of images and with an inner architecture based on a technique of the suggestive symbol. On the other hand, one can recognize in Pillat’s lyricism belonging to this first creative phase a certain discrepancy between sensitivity and rationality, between sympathetic impulse and the control of lucidity. The poet’s spirit can best be found in the opposites that form it and give it the dominant emotional tone. Anxiety and balance, frenzy and impassiveness, contemplative recollection and vitalistic expansion - are constitutive antinomies of the deep inner being of the poet, protean dimensions of the same consciousness, caught as such in a poem: “Sunt zile când mi-e dorul flămând ca un barbar./ Războinicii călări i-aș năpusti ca vântul./ Și aș cânta cu dâșii prin stepe; iar pământul/ Învins ca de cutremur s-ar prăbuși. Cuvântul/ Ce mântuie-n biserici s-ar cere în zadar.// Sunt zile când mie dorul așa de bun, s-ar duce/ Să dea întregu-mi suflet cum alții dau un ban/ Și inima-mi deschisă la toți, s-ar face han/ La care năvăli-va norodu-n lung chervan./ Sunt clipe când în spate aș vrea să port o cruce.// În alte zile dorul mă face rău și rece/ Trăind de piatră parcă, nepăsător idol.../ Și miezul vieții însuși îmi pare că e gol/ Că omul e o mască și mila e un rol/ Și, orb, privesc durerea ce lângă mine trece”.

A privileged topos of pillatian poetry is that of memory. Memory plays a fundamental role in the work of Ion Pillat. It restores the lost landmarks of being, it recovers the latter’s roots in an anamnestic approach that suggests the nostalgia of the original and the beatitude of a mythical time. Memory is the one that brings a spiritualized space out of the temporal indifferentiation of the past; that space is configured as an emotional projection rather than as mimetic representation. One deals here with a recovery of past ages, especially that of childhood, for which Pillat always harbored an enduring fascination. In one of his interventions, the poet asserts precisely the role of this age of childhood in shaping artistic vision, creative personality: “I strongly believe and I am deeply convinced of this truth: that in the life of the artist, in terms of the importance of their echoes in the completed work, childhood years matter not twice or three times more than adult years but a hundred times more (...). Especially as

regards my poetry and my spiritual structure, the role of memories, experiences and influences of my childhood and even of my adolescence seem capital." "The house of memory" is the one that favors a constant connection between past and present, restoring the balance of being by restoring bridges between past and present experience. Things, objects and beings recover their privileged condition, restore an idealizing and mythicizing contour: "În casa amintirii nu-i *astăzi* și nu-i *ieri*,/ Căci orologiul vremii a încetat să bată/ Și clipa netrăită a înghețat pe el./ Dar prin iatac adesea te-apucă și te fură/ Miresmele cosite cu florile de fân/ Păstrate sub răcoarea pânzetului de in./ Și, seara, pe divane în liniștite-odăi/ Tot mai pogoară cîntec și zumzănit de strună/ Ca de pe alăuta plâpânelor visări,/ Când, în apus de soare și răsărit de lună,/ Simțim zădărnicia întâilor uitări./ Rămân aceleași toate, și somnul fără zbuțum/ Îl dorm sub coperișul aceluiși trecut./ Stafie, trece gândul prin casa mea străveche/ Sub raza călăuză a visului tăcut".

The poem *Aci sosi pe vremuri* belongs to the volume *Pe Argeș în sus* of 1923, the volume of Ion Pillat's lyrical consecration. It's a poem of *time* evoked with intense suggestiveness, a poem of memory and birthplace space, circumscribed by the data of the purest essence of the bucolic. The approach of the facets of time and space is done under the sign of indeterminacy. The adverb "aci" (here) and the adverbial phrase "pe vremuri" (formerly) have no role in specifying a precisely determined space and a time recorded in its rigorous data. The poem's semantic axis is given, as has been noted by commentators, precisely by this adverb, "aci," which structures the temporal levels of the past and present, in a nostalgic lyrical tone. As noted by V. Fanache, "preserving its steadfastness and functionality, *aci* often plays the role of witness of human time, never the same, it is the mirror space of recurring initiations into the mystery of marriage and death. And yet, ultimately *aci* is itself placed in the flow of becoming and, even if its duration is incomparably greater than that of the human being, *aci* represents a perishable "shelter", depending on the pace of the 'arrivals' and 'departures' of man". Two thematic instances preside over the poem: first "the house of memory," a sign of stability and steadfastness, of the recovery of an irrevocable past, and *time*, with its devastating force, which disfigures things, giving them a patina of age and a dull brightness ("La casa amintirii cu-obloane și pridvor,/ Păianjeni zăbreliță și poartă, și zăvor.// Iar hornul nu mai trage alene din ciubuc/ De

când luptară-n codru și poteri și haiduc./ În drumul lor spre zare
 îmbătrâniră plopilor./ Aici sosi pe vremuri bunica-mi Calyopi”). Becoming,
 with its two aspects, irreversible time and time recovered by memory, is
 encoded by the image of the tower and of the bell that marks a double
 foreboding: a nuptial and a funeral one. The chime of the bell announces, in
 an inaccurate way, the song of becoming, instauring a sort of melancholy
 of metaphysical origin of the being immersed in irreversible time: “Și cum
 ședeau... departe, un clopot a sunat,/ De nuntă sau de moarte, în turnul
 vechi din sat.// Dar ei, în clipa asta, simțeau c-o să rămână.../ De mult e
 mort bunicul, bunica e bătrână...// Ce straniu lucru: vremea! Deodată pe
 perete/ Te vezi aievea numai în ștersele portrete.// Te recunoști în ele, dar
 nu și-n fața ta./ Căci trupul tău te uită, dar tu nu-l poți uita.../ Ca ieri sosi
 bunica... și vii acuma tu:/ Pe urmele berlinei trăsura ta stătu”. The ritual
 identity of "then" and "now" comes from the repeatability of gestures and
 ceremonies of existence. "The house of memory" restores its structure with
 each generation that inhabits it, that enlivens its so fragile and yet thorough
 architecture. The past / present temporal parallelism is further evidenced by
 the reiteration of the bell image at the end of the poem, the image that
 closes in a circle, the generic framework of the universe imagined by the
 poet, a universe seized by a nostalgic thrill, in which the tragedy of passage
 dissolves in bookish melancholy and serene detachment from things: “M-ai
 ascultat pe gânduri, cu ochi de ametist,/ Și ți-am părut romantic și poate
 simbolist./ Și cum ședeam... departe, un clopot a sunat/ - Același clopot
 poate – în turnul vechi din sat...// De nuntă sau de moarte, în turnul vechi
 din sat”. *Aci sosi pe vremuri* is, as noted by G. Călinescu, “graceful,
 moving and indivisible parallel between two centuries, setup that delights
 the eyes and at the same time symbolizes uniformity in the making.”
 Moreover, Cristian Livescu believes that the poem is "an interesting poem,
 it conceives a way of approaching poetry in terms of refreshment (retelling,
 ‘restaging’) of the myth recorded on ‘on the waves of the soul.’ “The house
 of memory,” the “tower,” the “bell” - are thematic elements related to the
 topos of time, elements that render its flow rhythmical, make it visible,
 while giving coherence to a universe whose becoming occurs smoothly,
 like a twilight that quietly descends over the world, with a melancholy
 slowness. Past and present are facing each other in this poem in which the
 ceremony of remembrance brings to the reader past fragments, fragments
 of memory, figures and gestures from a ritual of nostalgic evocation. In

Pillat's work, between "landscape" and "feeling" an obvious communion is established. To an inner state corresponds an appropriate landscape while places receive emotional notes, become emotionally colored. In this way, especially in his pastels that transpose projections of landscape rather than landscapes themselves, Pillat established himself in Romania as one of the most important representatives of traditionalism.